

Appendix 5 – Recycling tracker survey Spring 2023

Source: <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/recycling-tracker-survey-spring-2023>

Summary

The survey provides insights into UK citizens' attitudes towards recycling, as well as a greater understanding of their recycling-related behaviours. It provides the sector with insights on the intended user of the recycling reforms, supporting governments, Local Authorities, and waste collectors with an understanding of the barriers and motivators that citizens face when participating in the system.

The tracker results demonstrate a number of key findings about recycling behaviour:

- Recycling is an established and normalised behaviour - 90% of UK citizens regularly recycle.
- Whilst recycling is an established norm across the UK and there is still more to do, the latest research reveals a pattern of incremental but positive improvements in behaviour. These are largely driven by reduced contamination especially for plastic wrapping, film and pouches, with corresponding increases in the recycling rates of these items at front of store.
- Over half (53%) miss opportunities to recycle common items (which increases to 80% if we include glass perfume and aftershave bottles).
- Contamination remains at high levels - 81% dispose of an item in the recycling when it is not accepted locally (37% for serious contaminants).
- On average, UK citizens dispose of 5.4 items incorrectly. A significant improvement since 2021 (6.1 items) but consistent with recent waves.
- The Recycle Now 'Swoosh' and On-Pack Recycling Labelling (OPRL) are widely recognised, especially in Wales (75% of citizens).
- Across the UK, close to two in five (39%) have and use a food recycling service. A further one in five (18%) have a service but do not use it. Around two in five (43%) say they do not have a service.
- Attitudes to food waste recycling were largely positive. Amongst other statements, 85% agree that it is their responsibility as citizens to recycle their food waste.
- Both Wales and Northern Ireland have significantly higher levels of use compared to England.
- Key barriers to food waste recycling include smells (19%), leaks and spills from the liner (16%), and flies/maggots (15%). Non-users are much more likely to cite these barriers. Those who have a higher disgust sensitivity are more likely to cite these barriers too.
- Food waste recycling continues to have a weaker norm compared to dry recycling
- Finally, more than a third (36%) of UK citizens said they have heard something about the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in the UK although there is significant uncertainty around what the scheme will include.